

Jealousy and Trust

by Sheankelor

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Summary: A temper tantrum doesn't mean caring, at least not to everyone. Hermione and Severus both have a lesson to learn, and Harry does his best to explain.

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_AN: This one became a pushy plot bunny preventing me from writing the last chapter of "Making it Work" - Ron's POV of The Dungeon. It was inspired by an old song "Johnny get Angry" by Joanie Sommers. I have never cared for the sentiments in the song, and this was a good place to show it.

>Lots of thanks goes to YenGirl and Elflina for commenting on the need for one more scene and to YenGirl for editing. Now, I hope I can finish the other tale.
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Jealousy and Trust

"Ron Weasley gets mad, that is just what Ron does!"

Hermione's outburst, almost a shout, stopped Severus as he passed the partially opened parlour door. Frowning, he looked through the crack, catching sight of the puzzled look on Harry's face and knew his own mirrored it. Hermione's aggravation at Ronald's temper was surprising at this point of time – it was a fact of life, one of those things you just accept in your partner. Severus accepted Harry's 'Saving Lives' thing while Harry accepted his 'People are Dunderheads' thing. Ronald had to have accepted Hermione's 'I have to Know Everything' thing. It was part of being a couple.

Hermione spun about, her back stiff as she stared out the window. Severus knew she wasn't seeing the front patch of grass barely surviving the shade of the large oak tree. It was Harry's patch of grass, Severus was all for making it a stone patio and putting a table and chairs there, but as long as Harry kept it alive, he would

wait.

"So, why doesn't he get mad when Philip takes me out for lunch? Even when I tell him afterwards, he just nods. He doesn't even look at me!"

Severus was about to go off when his steps were arrested once again. Turning back, he now understood Hermione's issue. It was similar to his. Harry never seemed to have a problem if other people flirted with him. He could at least brush it off as Harry being naive, but Ronald wasn't.

Harry leaned forward as he spoke, his head shaking side to side, destroying any attempt Severus saw him take that morning to control his hair.

"You're mad, you're upset, because he is controlling his temper?"

"Yes!" Hermione spun about, her hair flaring out with the force of the turn. "Just how would you feel if Severus didn't act possessive of you? I bet you would feel like you weren't worth the time of day."

Severus stared at Harry's shaking head and drooped shoulders. He knew he was overprotective. He hated it when Harry talked to younger men, ones he barely knew. Going out for lunch with any of them, like Hermione described, would have cut him to the quick and he would have cruelly lashed out at anyone around.

Harry jumped to his feet and paced for a moment before facing Hermione.

"I would be glad."

Severus wished he could pace as well, but his feelings were once again mirroring Hermione's expression â€" stunned and confused. Harry would be glad if he just let his partner go anywhere with anyone and not react?

"What? You are lying, Harry! I know if Severus didn't show he cared you would be upset. You would be right here, in my place, fussing and attempting to find out what you did wrong."

Severus didn't take his eyes off of Harry as Hermione's words bounced against the wall. His heart was in his throat. Yes, they were working, they'd been living together for five years now, but this was one of his worst fears â€" Harry didn't care enough to worry about how he felt. His other was that Harry didn't care enough to show it.

The absolute stillness that cloaked Harry pulled him from his thoughts.

"You think that display of temper is showing that he cares?" Even as Hermione nodded yes, Harry's hands clenched at his side. His words when he spoke next were quiet but it didn't take away from their intensity. "They show I've failed. I've failed to make him believe, even after eight years, that I care. That he is the only one who can catch my heart, my eye, and my thoughts."

Severus felt those words pierce his mind even as the image of Harry slumped in abject failure burned his eyes. How could Harry take his insecurities as a failure?

"Then why do you let him go off without a word?"

Harry's head shot up, his eyes burning. "Are you talking about Mitch Walker?!"

Without waiting for a reply, he took a deep breath and let out on a long sigh, obviously releasing his anger as well. Severus felt his eyes widen. He had never seen Harry mad about Mitch.

"I trust Severus, just as Ron trusts you." Harry unclenched his hands. "I trust Mitch as far as I can push him with a broken quill. I know he would be all over Severus in a heartbeat. No, it is not him who I trust, but Severus. I trust Severus to know exactly what Mitch wants and that he is capable of stopping anything he doesn't want to happen. Even though they have conversations that I can't even hope to understand, that Mitch can mentally stimulate Severus far more than I can even dream of, I know that Severus cares for me. I trust that he cares for me enough that he won't start a relationship with someone else until he ends ours."

Severus stared at Harry as he tried to take in what was just said. Harry had told him many times that he trusted him, that he cared for him, that he loved him, but he knew there many levels of trust and caring. He had been a spy far too long not to learn that lesson.

"But isn't it easier to just show Mitch that Severus is yours?" Hermione took a step forward. "I've seen you when he asks Severus to lunch and you have to be somewhere else. All you do is nod, touch Severus' arm, and then fade away. It is the same thing with Ron. Philip has taken me to lunch all week, and all Ron does is nod, brush my hair away from my face, and then walk away. He never looks Philip in the face."

Severus stopped himself from leaning in the doorway, desperately waiting for the answer.

"I still cannot wrap my brain around the fact that you want Ron to lose it."

Hermione huffed up and crossed her arms over her chest. "It isn't that! I want him to show that he cares for me! To show everyone that it matters to him who I am with! That I matter! All through school he got mad over you. He would lose his temper, and then you two would make up. It is like you matter more to him!"

Hot and heavy jealousy spewed its way out of Severus' heart. He defeated it easily with skills born from many years of practice. Harry had proved to him long ago that Ronald was not someone he had to be concerned with. Glaring at the back of that messy black head, he willed Harry to answer the first question.

With a sigh filled to the brim with frustration, Harry flung himself onto the sofa while at the same time tossing his hands into the air.

"He does care for you! Why are you so intent on a loud brash display? Sure, we are Gryffindors, but even we might have a bit of understanding of the times and climes. You don't just go acting a fool in the middle of the Ministry! Well, unless you are high enough on the hierarchy ladder, and none of us are. Do you honestly think Severus would appreciate a Gryffindor display of jealousy and such just for going out for lunch? Hermione, he is a Slytherin! One of the best, likes his private life private â€" his business is just that, his. Just as yours is yours. Ron is not ignoring what is happening, he is honouring where he is and who he is with."

Tightening up his slackened jaw, Severus shuddered at the image of Harry acting like he had as a student in the middle of the Ministry. That one small image suddenly destroyed any desire for Harry to "stake his claim" when Mitch was being too forward.

"As for not staking my claim," Harry leaned forward, resting his arms on his thighs, his hands open before him, as if asking how something was not noticeable. "I am! I touch his wand arm every time, right before I leave. His wand arm, Hermione! Nothing touches his wand arm, noâ€"thing! He is very careful that it is never blocked â€" and I mean never. He doesn't even stir his cauldrons with it or hold his fork, or anything thing else that can obstruct his use of that hand â€" even in his sleep. Hermione, that one touch says more to anyone who pays attention than me shouting in the middle of Diagon Alley that Severus Snape is mine. All because I can rest my hand on his arm, preventing him from drawing his wand, for as long as I like. Several evenings I've rested my hand there for the entirety of our conversation â€" most of the night â€" and I was the one who moved it â€" not him. I would never do so in public â€" at least not that long â€" but the sheer fact that I did touch it for mere seconds is telling enough."

Severus looked at his left arm, his wand arm, and realized that Harry was right. Even standing here, hiding behind the door, he was angled so nothing was preventing him from pulling and using his wand. Thinking back he also realized Harry did touch his arm every time he left him. "He does it longer before I go off with Mitch."

"Ron trusts you, Hermione." Harry relaxed slightly, his hands dropping, but his face maintained his earnest expression. "He trusts you to understand just what Philip wants, he trusts you to protect yourself if you need to. He knows you can, just as I know Severus can. You've faced Death Eaters, you've pretended to be Bellatrix, even more importantly you punched Draco Malfoy in the face. If Ron lost his temper, if he got mad, then he is just showing that he doesn't trust you, that he doesn't think you can take care of yourself. It is the same reason I don't do it with Severus. There. is. no. need."

"But how am I supposed to know that? How am I supposed to know that he even cares or trusts me?"

Hermione threw herself into Severus' armchair, causing him to raise an eyebrow. Opting to ignore it, he wondered how Harry was going to answer her question. Harry tipped his head to one side and seemed to be studying her. It was an expression he knew well as it was his own.

"That is part of the trust thing. I trust that Severus understands, or that he will one day. And even if he doesn't fully get it, he will at least know that I care through other means. You know that Ron loves you, right?"

Hermione nodded.

"So, you've got part of it. You just haven't been paying close attention â€" I know Severus has been. I mean, when does he miss anything about me?"

Severus blinked and held in a sigh. He normally didn't miss much, he agreed with Harry on that, but he had missed the one telling clue that set his heart to rest. Harry touching his wand arm was far more subtle than he ever expected his Gryffindor to be. If Ronald was employing a tactic just as subtle it didn't surprise him that Hermione was missing it. _'Her hair! She never lets anyone touch her hair.'_

"What have I missed?"

She didn't look too put out that Harry thought Severus would be more observant.

"What is Ron's usual habit when he leaves you?"

Harry grinned as Hermione's face crumpled in thought.

"Well, in the morning he will kiss me good bye, but you are right â€" the Ministry is not a place to do that. When we are in company and he has to go, it is what I said earlier. He will nod, maybe say bye, brush my hair away from my face, and then leave."

Harry crossed the room and reached towards Hermione's hair. She moved slightly, blocking him from anything but the far edges. "Even I don't get to brush your hair out of your face, Hermione."

The stunned look on her face was what Severus thought his might have looked like just a moment earlier.

"Why won't he at least look at Philip then? You look at Mitch."

"I'm not quite as hot headed as Ron, either. He trusts you, but not himself. I bet he would lose his temper if he looked at him, or at least say something he shouldn't. I know I am biting my tongue the entire time I'm looking at Mitch and he is ogling Severus." Harry moved back to the sofa, a slight smile on his face. "You are a formidable witch, Hermione. One who knows how to take care of herself. Ron knows that, and is trusting you to tell him of you need something else. So, if you need Ron to act more possessive, tell him â€" I know he would be happy to oblige."

Green eyes flicked towards the cracked door, catching Severus' gaze for a moment before returning back to Hermione. It was all Severus needed to see to know that Harry knew he was there the entire time and was giving him the same advice.

Drifting away from the door at last, Severus wondered if he wanted a possessive Harry. Stepping into the kitchen, he decided that things were fine the way they were. He now understood the touches and that

was all that mattered.

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"Honestly, Severus," Mitch whined. "Harry knows we are going to lunch together. You don't need to report in to the boy each time."

Severus lengthened his stride, knowing the shorter man was already having problems keeping up. "Report in? You think Harry is keeping me on such a short leash that I report to him where I go and with whom?"

Turning the corner, he spotted Harry and Ron leaning against a wall near the Auror training rooms. The state of their robes assured him that they were only taking a minor break from beating survival instincts into the up and coming defenders of the peace. If they were done enough to go out, they would have changed into something more presentable.

Running an eye over the scruffy worn black robe, Severus couldn't help the warm glow that filled him. The morning after Harry's talk with Hermione, he had tossed them at the green-eyed man, suggesting he use them during classes. Harry had looked at the old potions stained robe and then back at him before agreeing. The message was loud and clear "Harry accepted his claim. No-one could dress Harry" not even the Aurors could get him to wear their uniform as he was only an official trainer, not a member of the corps. Sure, no-one else knew what the robe represented just as no-one else knew what Harry touching his arm meant, but to see Harry willingly wearing his old robe, dressing himself in Severus warmed Severus' heart.

"Severus!" Harry pushed off the wall, his eyes darting to Mitch only to quickly return to him. "I'm sorry I can't go with you right now. Ron and I have another class coming in just a minute. They'll be done in an hour."

Severus caught the hopeful look and inflection in the last sentence. Running his brewing schedule through his mind, he absent-mindedly avoided Mitch's hand reaching for his right arm while even noting the arrival of Philip Todd with Hermione.

"Severus, come on, I won't be free in an hour, this is the only time I will be able to join you."

Mitch missed his arm again even as Harry's expression became even more hopeful. Severus could practically see the daydream of a lunch date forming behind those bright eyes.

"An hour and a half?" Severus fought the grin as Harry nodded. He glanced at Ronald. "Will you be joining us?"

"Depends on Hermione's schedule." Bright blue eyes met brown, ignoring the man next to Hermione completely.

"I can make it in an hour, but it will have to be a quick lunch." Hermione grinned at Ronald's eye roll.

"Then Philip needs to head out now." Ronald waved the other man towards the exit. "He always takes so long eating."

The blond puffed up, his affront clearly written on his face. "She can just come with me and you can meet us later, if you make it. Hermione shouldn't have to rush through her lunch just for you."

"He isn't making me, Philip. I volunteered." Hermione stepped closer to Ronald, a smile curling her lips. "I'll see you in an hour."

Severus smirked slightly at the nonplussed expression on Philip's face. It seemed as if Ronald and Hermione had worked out their differences as well.

Harry's hand on his arm distracted him from watching the blond stride off, Ronald still waving him off with an arm around Hermione.

"Where shall I meet you?"

It didn't escape his notice that Harry had insinuated himself between him and Mitch. "Near my workroom?"

Harry nodded before stepping back, only letting go of his arm at the last second. "I'll be there. Would you mind if I come early, I'll sit in the corner and be very quiet?"

"It might be the best idea, Severus," said Ronald. "Who knows who will track him down if they think he is free."

Catching Harry's arm as the trainees rounded the corner, Severus pulled him around to face him. "You'll not be sitting quietly. I think those robes would make the perfect outfit for cleaning a few of the cauldrons that will be waiting."

Running a hand down the front, Harry smiled cheekily. "More like messing them up, but I'll be willing to help clean up if only to get us out the door faster."

Stepping back, Severus gestured towards the group of trainees. "Your dunderheads have arrived. I will see you when you are done." Spinning about, he started down the hall, Hermione and Mitch falling in step with him.

"Severus," Hermione spoke before Mitch could start. "Ron and I wish you two to come over for dinner this weekend since Molly and Arthur are out of town to see Charlie."

"Of course, or you could come to our place. I'll talk it over with Harry at lunch." He watched as she nodded and turned down a different corridor.

"Severus, I have to go to lunch now and you should as well. I've seen your brew schedule. You can't fit in lunch in an hour and a half."

Glaring at Mitch, Severus reminded himself that he put up with the former Ravenclaw for his ability to hold an intelligent conversation. "You have no idea of my brew schedule. Go, enjoy lunch – take Matthew and Thomas, they should be able to hold a decent conversation."

With a sharp nod, he strode away, leaving the man far behind him. With his lab door locked and warded, he started on the next potion on his revised schedule, determined not to miss his lunch date with Harry.

End
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